

Governor Carney Signs Legislation to Expand Access to Overdose-Reversing Medication to Pharmacies

New law will allow pharmacists to dispense naloxone without an individual prescription under same protections afforded to doctors

DOVER, Del. – Governor John Carney on Thursday signed into law [Senate Bill 48](#) to expand community access to the life-saving drug naloxone by making it possible for pharmacists to dispense the antidote without an individual prescription under the same legal protections afforded to doctors, peace officers, and people who participate in the Community-Based Naloxone Access Program.



Governor Carney signs legislation making Nalaxone available in pharmacies.

Naloxone, an antidote to opioid overdoses, will be available at the pharmacy counter in participating pharmacies to anyone who is educated on its appropriate use and signs an acknowledgement form. The bill signing took place at a CVS pharmacy in Dover. The law ensures pharmacists can dispense naloxone responsibly without legal, criminal, or disciplinary

adverse actions due to injuries or death sustained in connection with administering the drug.

Senator Bryan Townsend and Representative David Bentz sponsored Senate Bill 48, and the legislation passed the General Assembly with unanimous support.

“Increasing our ability to prevent overdose deaths is vital to our response to the addiction epidemic,” said **Governor Carney**. “Naloxone can give people a second chance to get medical care and be connected to resources to treat their addiction. Signing this legislation empowers pharmacists to join the fight against opioid overdoses and save more lives. Thank you to Senator Townsend, Representative Bentz and all members of the General Assembly for their leadership on this issue.”

“Put simply, this legislation will save lives,” said **Senator Townsend, Chair of the Senate Health and Social Services Committee**. “We cannot combat the scourge of addiction being felt all across our state without ensuring that every potential life-saving tool is available. Shame, stigma, or fear should not be impediments to Delawareans who, in a moment of crisis, need immediate access to naloxone to reverse an overdose and save the life of a friend or loved one.”



(Photo courtesy of Doug Curran/CVS Health)

“Policymakers have a duty to address the disease of addiction and reduce its stigma as residents throughout Delaware

struggle with substance use disorder,” said **Representative Bentz, Chair of the House Health Committee**. “Access to naloxone, the overdose-reversing antidote, needs to be a key part of combatting this disease. This legislation is about improving access to naloxone and saving lives. I am proud to see Gov. Carney and the Delaware Division of Public Health lead on this initiative, and I feel that we need to continue to place a focus on halting the addiction epidemic, helping families and curbing our state’s ever-growing number of overdose fatalities.”

“Families from up and down the state are impacted by the addiction epidemic and we have to do what we can to make sure that they are equipped with resources to help their loved one – and in some cases a complete stranger – grappling with substance use disorder. Naloxone is one of those valuable resources,” said **Representative Paul Baumbach**. “We have worked to increase treatment options, and with this bill, we are improving access to naloxone to be used in emergency opioid overdose situations. I am pleased that we were able to work successfully with the pharmacists to improve the bill’s wording, to ensure that Delaware families can be confident that the naloxone they receive was properly dispensed. The state has been diligent about increasing trainings for how to administer naloxone and this legislation coincides with that effort.”

A current standing medical order allows for dispensing of naloxone to be administered via auto-injector and intranasal and intramuscular routes. Dr. Karyl Rattay, Director of the Division of Public Health, will issue a revised standing order in September following Medical Board approval, allowing pharmacists at participating pharmacies to dispense an additional form of the intranasal naloxone which should be available in October 2017.

Naloxone was administered in Delaware 1,535 times in 2016 and 866 times in the first half of 2017.

Within three to five minutes after administration, naloxone can counteract the life-threatening respiratory depression of an opioid-related overdose and stabilize a person's breathing which buys time for emergency medical help to arrive. DPH recommends calling 9-1-1 immediately if you find someone in the midst of a suspected overdose, starting rescue breathing, and then administering naloxone. Naloxone is not a replacement for emergency medical care and seeking immediate help is still vital.

"The practical effect of Senate Bill 48 is that naloxone will be available essentially over-the-counter following a brief training on appropriate use," said **David Humes, member of the Board of Directors of atTAcK addiction**. "We recognize it isn't a solution to the opiate/heroin epidemic, but it gives a small sense of comfort and security to loved ones that have someone in active use. My son, Greg, died of a relapse after 17 months of sobriety. Had laws such as this been in effect at the time, things may have been very different for Greg and my family. atTAcK addiction will continue to work to support life-saving laws. Our guiding principal is 'First save the life' and where there is life, there is hope."

"DHSS joins atTAcK addiction in this important work. Our first priority is to save lives, and expanding access to this overdose-reversing medication through local pharmacies gives more people in the community the opportunity to help us do that," said **Dr. Kara Odom Walker, Secretary of the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services**. "As we expand access, we also need to figure out new ways to connect Delawareans suffering from addiction to comprehensive and person-centered treatment services so they can begin their recovery from this disease."

In 2016, 308 people died from overdoses in Delaware, compared to 228 overdose deaths reported in 2015. Through mid-July of this year, there have been 121 suspected overdose deaths.

“Addiction is a chronic disease,” said **DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay**. “As with any chronic disease, we need to ensure there is a comprehensive response that meets people where they are. If someone is struggling with an opioid addiction, it is important that family members and loved ones get trained on appropriate naloxone use and have it on hand so they may help their loved one in a time of need. And, visit www.HelpIsHereDE.com to learn more about prevention, detox and treatment resources.”

“We are proud to host Governor Carney and leaders from across Delaware at CVS Pharmacy to sign this important legislation that will build on our continued commitment to helping address and prevent prescription drug abuse in the communities we serve,” said **Mark Bastarache Region Manager for CVS Pharmacy**. “CVS Health has now worked with 42 states across the country to increase access to this live-saving opioid overdose-reversal drug, in addition to growing our prevention education and safe medication disposal programs.”

All CVS Pharmacy locations in Delaware will begin to dispense naloxone to patients under the Public Health Standing Order later this summer.

Co-sponsors of Senate Bill 48 included Sens. Stephanie Hansen, Gerald Hocker and Ernie Lopez, and Reps. Ruth Briggs King, Debra Heffernan, Deborah Hudson, Helene Keeley, Joseph Miro and Trey Paradee.

For more information on administering naloxone, accessing treatment resources in Delaware, or to learn about the signs of addiction, visit the newly updated Help is Here website at www.HelpIsHereDE.com. If you or a loved one is suffering from addiction, call DHSS’ 24/7 Crisis Hotline to be connected to treatment options. In New Castle County, call 800-652-2929, or in Kent and Sussex counties, call 800-345-6785.

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